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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [PREL](#) [PINR](#) [RS](#)
SUBJECT: MINISTRY OF JUSTICE SEEKS TO CLOSE HUMAN RIGHTS
RESEARCH CENTER

REF: MOSCOW 00861

Classified By: Minister-Counselor for Political Affairs Kirk Augustine.
Reasons: 1.4(B/D).

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: The Ministry of Justice (MOJ) said publicly on January 27 that it is seeking to revoke the registration of the Russian Human Rights Research Center, which allegedly failed to provide required documentation about its activities in recent years. Center officials and other human rights activists deny the charge and plan to fight it in court. The announcement comes as NGOs are still reacting to accusations of NGO involvement in spying for the UK and other Kremlin moves aimed at bringing independent organizations to heel. END SUMMARY.

¶2. (U) The MOJ stated on January 27 that it was seeking to revoke the registration of the Moscow-based Russian Human Rights Research Center. According to the MOJ, the Center had failed over the last five years to provide information about its activities, as required by law. According to press reports, GOR officials indicated that last year, over eight hundred such cases were filed; three hundred resulted in revocation, and some four hundred had yet to be resolved. The case is expected to go to trial on February 27 in Moscow's Basmanniy Court.

¶3. (C) The Center, founded in 1992, is an umbrella organization that brings together prominent NGOs, including the Moscow Helsinki Group (MHG), the Union of Soldiers' Mothers (SM), and the Independent Psychiatric Association of Russia. Center Director Lyubov Vinogradova publicly stated that the suit is groundless and that it reflects the Kremlin's growing pressure on independent NGOs. Grigoriy Shvedov, a member of Memorial (which is not affiliated with the Center), told us January 30 that after learning of the charges, Center officials checked their records and concluded that they had filed all necessary paperwork. According to Shvedov, the Center had encountered problems even before the latest move, with MOJ officials refusing to allow it to change the composition of its Board of Directors on January ¶10.

¶4. (C) Soldiers' Mothers head Valentina Melnikova told us on January 30 that her organization was taking the situation very seriously, particularly because two SM projects could be affected by the Center's closure. Melnikova said that her organization would help the Center fight the case in court.

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COMMENT

¶5. (C) The GOR has recently gone after several of Russia's leading independent human rights organizations, most notably by accusing the Moscow Helsinki Group and the Eurasia Foundation, among others, of involvement with UK espionage (reftel). These latest charges provide further evidence that

the GOR plans to keep "political" NGOs under a tight rein. The fact that the case will be heard in the Basmanniy Court, which has a reputation for doing the Kremlin's bidding, bodes ill for the Center. Acknowledging that the current political climate worsens the Center's prospects, human rights activists nonetheless hope they can fight off the charges by demonstrating that the Center provided the required documentation.

BURNS